



PCC marks Violence Awareness Month



By [Cynthia Grau](#) Nov. 14, 2013

Pontiac, Ill. -- Offenders at Pontiac Correctional Center come from all walks of life and they put their differences aside during events held in October for Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. They cheered each other on during different events and encouraged each other to make donations, which makes the programs held at PCC stand out.

Emily Ruskin, casework supervisor at PCC said that events, such as a 5K run titled “Run Away from Violence,” weightlifting competitions and poetry, essay and art contests concentrating on violence as a choice were some of the activities held mainly for medium security inmates at the prison.

“The programs are really concentrated because those are the guys that are going home first,” Ruskin explained. “It stays around 500 inmates and we had a nice percentage of offenders participating in the activities. Participation was on a volunteer basis.”

One of the events that Ruskin and PCC Warden Randy Pfister said really hit home with a lot of the inmates was when Margie Morrison and other employees of the ADV/SAS shelter in Streator held discussions with the offenders about specifics of domestic violence, including how to break the cycle of violence, the effects of violence on children when they witness that and other issues with victims of violence.

“It went really well and the guys were very happy and appreciative,” Ruskin said. “I think it was really enlightening for them to learn more about domestic violence laws. We have been really concentrating on domestic violence, healthy relationships and victimization and programming that our counselors at our facility have really been facilitating for the offenders and it’s going really well. It speaks volumes as to how our staff is trying to change the lives of these guys prior to their release.”

Pfister pointed out that the Illinois Department of Corrections offers many opportunities for inmates to participate concerning different awareness issues, so this wasn’t anything new for PCC.

“This is one that, because of this being a maximum security facility, we endorse a lot because of the fact that a lot of our inmates are in for violent crimes,” Pfister pointed out. “We pursue trying to get any participation and various programming on this throughout the month to try to get as many participating as possible.”

They agreed that participating in the discussion with Morrison was an emotional time for many of the inmates. They said inmates really opened up to her and were appreciative of her taking time to speak with them.

On top of the events, the inmates even raised more than \$200 to send back to Morrison’s employer.

“The inmates, in a lot of cases, request to be able to put money in a fund and send it to places like this. This one here, specifically, was \$230. It may not seem like a lot in the community, but for inmates who rarely have more than \$15 or \$20 in their accounts, when they come together and put together that much money, it’s pretty amazing,” Pfister said. “They do this a lot for hurricanes and different catastrophes throughout the states, so this isn’t the first time they’ve put their money together.”

Tom Shaer, spokesperson for the Illinois Department of Corrections, pointed out that 25 prisons and two adult transition centers participated in the month’s activities.

“IDOC Director S.A. Godinez and this department have always been committed to efforts such as this at Pontiac (Correctional Center’s Violence Awareness and Prevention Month). We appreciate how such fine work maintains and improves safety and security inside PCC and other prisons. Importantly, it also reflects IDOC’s dedication to public safety,” Shaer stated.